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FIELD MICE CONTROL

There are two general groups of field mice; the meadow mice which live at the surface of the ground and pine mice which live under the ground. Both groups are very prolific, and under favorable conditions may become abundant.

CONTROL: Clean tillage and cultivation of weedy waste areas will keep the mice under control by destroying their breeding places. In the case of young fruit trees where cultivation is not possible the removal of grass and weeds for a space of 18 inches from the base of the tree will help protect them from attack. During periods of heavy snow, the snow should be tramped down about the trees. Some protection may also be secured by the use of tree protectors of wood veneer or wire cloth placed about the trunk. Repellent washes are also used to some extent. Of these, lime sulphur, about one to seven, brushed or sprayed on the trunk in the late fall has proved effective. Trapping may be resorted to where area to be protected is small. About 15 to 20 traps per acre, placed in the runways and either baited with grain or unbaited will greatly reduce the number of mice in a few weeks.

Perhaps the most effective large scale control operation is that of the use of poison bait. A recent recommendation of the biological survey U.S.D.A. is as follows:

Mix together while dry ⅛ ounce of powdered strickninе and ½ ounce of baking soda. Sift the strychnine-soda mixture over one quart of rolled oats, stirring constantly to insure an even distribution of the poison through the grain. Thoroughly warm the poisoned oats in an oven and sprinkle over them six tablespoonfuls of a mixture of three parts of melted beef fat in one part of paraffin, mixing until the oats are evenly coated. After the grain is cooled it is ready for use. For larger amounts increase the ingredients in proportion to the above formula. The coating of the oats with beef fat-paraffin is very important and must be well done.

Probably the most satisfactory way to distribute this poison bait is by use of a so called "poison station" which is made by separating two six inch boards an inch apart by two one-inch strips running across boards. The length of the boards should be about 8 inches for the top board and 6 inches for the bottom board. A groove should be made in about the middle of the upper side of the bottom board large enough to hold a tablespoonful of the bait. These "stations" are placed about the base of the tree and may be partly covered with grass or fine brush. In orchards where mice are abundant it is advisable to place a "poison station" under each tree. The "poison station" should be placed on high ground so that at no time it will stand under water. The "station" should be examined and refilled as required. This refilling should be done at least two times a year, late in the fall and again in the winter, and preferably also in the spring.

NATURAL ENEMIES. Hawks, owls, snakes, skunks, cats, dogs; and a few other wild animals are the chief of the natural enemies of mice. It will be to the orchardman's interest to protect as many of these natural enemies as is consistent with other agricultural practices of the community.